

# Translation as Social Action: Brecht's 'Political Texts' in Greek

## La traduction comme activisme social : les « textes politiques » de Brecht en grec

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### Résumé de l'article

Le présent article situe une importante anthologie des textes de Brecht dans le contexte de la junte grecque (1967-1974). Il est possible d'observer, en s'appuyant sur les travaux du sociologue Pierre Bourdieu, comment peut se manifester dans le texte une euphémisation du pouvoir, soit une forme de contestation du régime qui à l'époque était considérée par de nombreuses maisons d'éditions comme un « art social ». L'article met aussi en lumière la présentation stratégique de l'anthologie qui, en identifiant « une pluralité identitaire » s'élevant contre la violence physique et symbolique, parvient à nous aider à nous représenter l'oppression nazie dans la junte.

# Translation as Social Action: Brecht's 'Political Texts' in Greek

**Dimitris Asimakoulas**

## **Introduction**

The premise that translation is the product of individuals, events in societies, dominant or less dominant discourses and (conflicting) social group/institutional allegiances is gaining ground in the area of translation studies. The increasing relevance of combining textual analysis and contextual exploration can be seen in publications on research methodologies (see Tymoczko, 2002) as well as fully blown studies that examine the position of translation within interlocking networks of power interdependencies (Bassnett, 1999; Lefevere, 1992; Tymoczko, 1999; Venuti, 1998). This is coupled (if not caused) by developments in other disciplinary areas in the humanities, developments that by necessity spill over to translation studies and help generate more meaningful analyses of translation phenomena. Most importantly, conceptual tools from the area of sociology have recently been employed in the hope that both sides of the interdisciplinarity continuum can benefit by them (see, for instance, Inghilleri, 2005; Baker, 2006).

Generally, a translator, like any other individual in society, seems to exhibit a certain type of behaviour which is simultaneously unique and diffuse/socially conditioned (see Simeoni, 1998). The same may apply to the work/discourse generated by a translator; it too reflects his/her multiple (subject) positions and affiliations in society. The centrality of power relations affecting these positions can be seen, among other contexts, in situations of

censorship.<sup>1</sup> To paraphrase Philpotts (2007, p. 258), this is where the conventionally diminished 'author function' of a translator meets the external intervention of the censor or the translator's anticipation of this intervention; and yet it is usually far from clear where the distinction between censorship, self-censorship and autonomous production can be drawn, simply because of the complexity of (political or other) opportunities and the translator's motivational background (*ibid.*, pp. 268-269). This is why a more holistic view of the act of translation is required (for a Bourdieusian approach to censorship see Asimakoulas, 2005; Billiani, 2007).

In this paper I would like to focus on Bourdieu's framework of sociology of culture which can shed light on the role of translation as a social phenomenon; as symbolic forms, translations are used by socially conditioned individuals who occupy different positions in a fabric of socio-discursive, cultural and aesthetic traditions according to material and symbolic interests that they pursue. In *Distinction*, Bourdieu elaborates a formula for his sociological research that reveals the unity underlying a variety of practices: [(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice (Bourdieu, 2002, p. 101). I will use these three concepts in order to discuss the resistance function of a collection of Brecht's works as observed in the publishing field under the Greek junta: *Πολιτικά Κείμενα* (1971) ('Political Texts') by *Stochastes Publications*.

### Capital of 'Trust' and the Regime's (Symbolic) Violence

All social practices are specifically geared to maximise access to resources in the social field. Thus, an individual's/institution's position in the socio-political sphere will depend on their access to economic (property), cultural (cultural goods and services), social (resources deriving from durable networks of institutionalised relationships of mutual recognition and acquaintance), and symbolic capital (prestige, honour); the last category is the form that any of the first three types of capital takes when it is filtered

1 See Kohlmayer (1992), Sturge (1999), Rundle (2000) and Merkle (2002).

through an individual's acquired categories of perception that *misrecognise* the arbitrariness of its possession and accumulation.<sup>2</sup> Symbolic capital is essential for maintaining power. Power in a certain system can be more effectively exercised when taken for granted. Thus, central to the notion of symbolic capital is the concept of *misrecognition*, which refers to the misperception of interest as disinterest, contributing to the reproduction of social order (Swartz, 1997, p. 90). Misrecognition also explains how a 'collective belief', a 'capital of trust' is transferred from the dominated to the dominant (*ibid.*, p. 92). As Bourdieu notes, relations of domination can be "set up (...) maintained or restored (...) through strategies which, if they are not to destroy themselves by revealing their true nature, must be disguised, transfigured, in a word, *euphemised*" (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 126, my emphasis). Bourdieu extends the linguistic term of euphemism to refer to a transmutation of unsettling aspects of power, their repackaging into something less unpalatable.

During the period under study here, an authoritarian regime combined physical violence, but also euphemised, or *symbolic violence* (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 128) to maintain its power. The *coup d'état* took place on 21 April 1967, as a response to an alleged plan for a communist takeover of the country. Martial law came into effect and all freedoms were drastically curtailed; the right to criticise the government was denied and *preventive censorship* (pre-publication censorship) was introduced, bringing the media under the direct control of the military (Athenian, 1972, p. 76). Arrests, surveillance, brutal interrogation techniques, torture, mass trials and intimidation of the general public all came to be part of the mechanism of terror the junta deployed throughout its seven-year rule (Gregoriades, 1975a, p. 307). Oppressive practices were routinely justified on the basis that Greece was in a state of emergency. This argument, along with the frequent announcement of ostensible reforms (promises for a return to a democratic rule, relaxation of oppressive measures)

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2 See Bourdieu (1983) [last accessed 15 June 2007] <[www.viet-studies.org/Bourdieu\\_capital.htm](http://www.viet-studies.org/Bourdieu_capital.htm)>

was used by the colonels in order to legitimise their rule without relinquishing the mechanism of terror that kept them in place.

The colonels' attempt to euphemise their rule can be seen in certain recurring themes of the junta's otherwise confusingly diverse discourse (i.e. in speeches, slogans, manifestos). These closely interrelated themes can be summarised as follows:

- 'Corruptocracy' (*φαυλοκρατία*). A neologism-cum-term-of-abuse that described the deplorable political/social situation in Greece before the coup (Theodorakopoulos, 1976, p. 191)
- Social and political salvation. The colonels employed 'somatic' discourse and medical imagery to explain their purging role (Van Dyck, 2002, p. 46)
- Demonisation of the country's enemies, that is, communists (Murtagh, 1994, p. 14)
- Return to the true values of justice, unity, truth, the nation (Clogg, 1972, p. 44)
- "Internal democracy", with no political parties, fiefs and dynasties (Clogg, 1972, p. 50)

The universal pretension of the junta (general welfare, communist threat scenario) was nothing more than an attempt to promote their 'interest in disinterest' (symbolic capital).

### **Habitus-Forming Events: Saviours and Outcasts**

The term *habitus* refers to practical dispositions acquired through time and space. When faced with concrete situations that generate opportunities and constraints, individuals act in a temperamental fashion, but always on the basis of their accumulated dispositional make-up, which constitutes an individual's *habitus*:

[A system] of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 53)

By structured structures and structuring structures Bourdieu refers to dispositions inculcated through socialisation and subsequently mapped onto concrete situations in real life.

A series of events that occurred before the junta moulded the habitus of Greek citizens and of the leaders of the junta. The 1950s were a period of convalescence for Greece, which had survived the enormities of WWII and a catastrophic civil war between the pro-Soviet military wing of the Communist Party and the right-wing government, which eventually prevailed with the help of the UK and the USA. A period of stable right-wing rule followed and the state sought to contain the left and to exclude communists from public life. Mutual mistrust and disillusionment characterised Greek society. The 1960s saw the rise to power of the socialist-labour party, Centre Union, but the main problems of social division remained and democratic processes were not respected by the conservative establishment and the king. This resulted in mass demonstrations. The army swiftly responded to this perceived lack of order and a group of colonels seized power.

The habitus of members of the junta was shaped by the deeply divisive period of the civil war and the configuration of the field of power in the post-war era. Emphasis on national issues and the elitist belief in the higher duty of saving the country are corollaries of these two factors and so is aversion to communism. This aversion took the form of verbal attacks, arrests, forced exile and various control mechanisms typically directed against communists. Purges were carried out in the armed forces, the civil sector, as well as the educational and the judicial system (Woodhouse, 1985, pp. 33-34). A critical attitude against the regime meant undermining Greece; all resistance activities were automatically perceived as part of a communist conspiracy to undermine the state (Murtagh, 1994, p. 57). Nevertheless, the junta was a complex alliance of forces and this resulted in a strategic tiptoeing between liberalisation and oppression, or symbolic violence (promises) and pure violence. The persecution of communists, for instance, continued intermittently and was inextricably linked to pressures either from abroad or from within the country.

Another influential factor was the ideological and concrete link between the members of the junta and the military professions; most leaders of the regime had risen from the ranks of *petit bourgeois* military groups. The military had always been accorded a position that was disproportionate to their true social function in Greek society. Equating the military—politically and socially—with those who governed the country (or the country itself) was more symbolic than substantive, because the Greek officers belonged to families of military men, farmers and the *petite bourgeoisie*, with moderate economic solvency as their only social advantage (Gregoriades, 1975b, pp. 62–63). Status and economic privileges of military professionals improved considerably under the junta, and especially between 1967 and 1970.

The social provenance of the junta leaders can explain one of the main attributes of the regime: its reactionary nature. Being unable to regenerate their ‘government’ or to implement the populist measures they routinely announced, the colonels started stirring up religious and nationalist sentiments. Ultra-nationalism and chauvinism featured prominently in their rhetoric. There was deep suspicion of everything that was progressive, or a manifestation of ‘neo-anarchism’ and ‘moral depravity’ (Clogg, 1972, p. 42). In the same conservative vein, the regime thwarted the growing use of *demotike*, or the common variety of Greek. The purist *katharevousa* variety, which is closer to ancient Greek, was put to broader educational, administrative and everyday use for the sake of effecting a vague link with the nation’s ‘glorious ancient past.’

### **Field: Censorship and the Pivotal Role of the Publishing Field in the Fight Against Oppression**

‘Field,’ as a metaphor, emphasises: a) the clash of various forces in structured and interrelated societal networks, b) spatial manoeuvring and resource allocation, c) the assumption of various positions, according to capital accumulation, and d) the influence of the network of positions on agents’ strategies, social practice and perception of the world around them. Despite the specificity of fields, there are certain common properties (Bourdieu, 1995, pp. 72–77; Swartz, 1997, pp. 123–127):

- agents in fields strive to gain exclusive control in the exercise of *symbolic violence*;
- fields are structured to a significant extent by their own internal mechanisms of development (*autonomy*);
- fields impose on actors specific forms of struggle: those in dominant positions routinely representing *orthodox* strategies and those in subordinate positions representing *heretical* strategies share a common, tacit acceptance—or *doxa*—that the struggle is worth pursuing. *Doxa* is, in other words, a necessary collusion, the common belief in 'the game' and the 'stakes' involved.

Contexts where censorship is applied are perhaps the clearest indications of a field's function for two reasons. The autonomy of the field of cultural production is drastically contained and the prevailing *doxa* in the field of power is spelled out. According to Bourdieu, every field functions as censorship, because those who enter it are immediately placed within a structure of capital distribution (1995, p. 91). Discourse owes its properties (both form and content) to the social conditions of its production, which determine what is to be said (and the right to say something in the first place) and whether/how it will be heard (*ibid.*, p. 90). In other words, it is not only what is prohibited in a field but also what is said that is a matter of censorship. For instance, the Greek junta's pursuit of symbolic capital extended beyond the socio-political field and translated as a demand for stability and unification of all public discourse, including the discourse of cultural production. The regime's representatives presented as desirable works in cinema, poetry, theatre and art in general that benefited the country and extolled ideals such as bravery, virtue, morality, family and God (Athenian, 1972, p. 97; Van Steen, 2001, p. 145). The authorities promoted or subsidised cultural products which were 'non-threatening'; repetitive boulevard comedies, chauvinistic films, mawkish serials, musicals, thrillers and harmless foreign imports formed the staple for theatre and cinema goers and television viewers (Komnenou, 1999, pp. 179–180; Van Steen, 2001, p. 147). Other strategies, such as establishing National Awards for literature, theatre, and the fine arts (Anonymous, 1974, p. 41) also helped the regime to inject the field of cultural production with their superficial aesthetic



standards and to give the impression that cultural life was not hindered.

Censorship did, of course, materialise as explicit restrictions. The conservative regime practiced preventive censorship, targeting cultural products that contained military references, references to fascism, revolutions and popular uprisings, subversive or communist ideas, pornography, criticism against the United States (that supported the regime), and any material that offended the nation or the three 'pillars' of Greek society: the monarchy, the Orthodox Church and the dictatorial government.<sup>3</sup> An index of 760 banned books was issued in 1969, to be subsequently withdrawn on 15 November 1969 when censorship was (officially) lifted. After 1969, books formerly included in the index could be sold at the publishers' own risk, because some of them "may still contravene the Press Law—Addendum 1971" (Athenian, 1972, p. 97); this vagueness allowed the junta to both intimidate cultural producers and project an image of intellectual freedom to the outside world (Roufos, 1972, p. 155).

The official lifting of censorship in November 1969 is an extremely important period in cultural matters in Greece, because it coincided with both the transformation of the publishing industry and attitudes toward censorship. Initially, writers defended the *autonomy* of the field of cultural production by 'opting out of the game'; they refused to produce any work thus amplifying the effects of censorship. This 'silence boycott,' was spearheaded by George Seferis, the 1963 Nobel Prize poet laureate. Certain publishing houses, however, especially *Keimena* and *Kalvos Publications*, saw the need to resist the propaganda of the regime and, as early as 1968, started publishing mainly reprints of classical Greek works and quality translations (Van Dyck, 2002, p. 59). *Keimena* launched two Brecht poetry anthologies after the end of censorship (one in February and one in November 1970) which were very well received by the Greek readership (for example, the first collection sold 2,000 copies in ten days and 3,000 reprints in ten days) (Soteropoulou, 1996,

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3 Details in Athenian (1972), Gregoriades (1975a) and Woodhouse (1985).

n.p.). The massive success of Brecht's poems may have motivated another influential publishing house, *Kedros*, to launch their subsequent best-selling 'Eighteen Texts' in July 1970; this book was a collection of Greek poems (Seferis now among the main contributors), short stories with a subversive import expressed through allegories, metaphors and the parodying of the junta's discourse (Van Dyck, 2002, pp. 80-97).

Such contributions signalled the ensuing demand for what publishers identified as 'resistance texts,' or *vivlia provlematismou* ('problem books'): serious books addressing important social issues and bringing readers closer to modern European thought (Kondogiannes, 1970, pp. 28-29 and 1971, p. 118; Chatzopoulos, 1971, n.p.). A sizeable group of politically sensitive publishers that appeared after the coup believed in the ideological awakening of Greek readers through serious literature, philosophy, literary theory, art, sociology and politics (Frangopoulos, 1971, p. 89; Soteropoulou, 1997, p. 4). Publishing houses that brought out *vivlia provlematismou* were not only *heretical* in opposing established trends in the field of cultural production, but they also responded to the abrupt change in the political field after the coup. They targeted students or older readers who opposed the regime. The growth of the publishing industry after 1970 fed directly into the student movement and the socio-political militancy it fostered; coinciding with the creation of various left-wing groups, the intense publishing activity and rapid book consumption after 1970 primarily concerned political books and subversive literature, which promoted critical thought (Axelos, 1984, p. 52; Regos, 1999, p. 233). A growing section of Greek society had also started becoming less tolerant of the dictatorship, adopting anti-American views and seeing the EEU as a force of democracy that could put pressure on the junta for a return to democracy (Poulantzas, 1975, p. 65). This change could help explain the fascination with modern European thought.

Agents in the publishing field sought to defend the autonomy of cultural production but simultaneously used books as a means to participate in the field of power. They were motivated to challenge the *doxa* on which the governing of the country was based. They attempted to mobilise Greek citizens through

their social or discursive activity and confirm certain visions of reality, namely those that undermined the junta. Because of the threat of physical violence, however, they had to *euphemise* their intervention. This involved creative evasion techniques such as: concealing the identity of the author, masking the content of the book, smuggling dissident material, indicating the cuts the censors made by inserting blank lines (or highlighting other subversive passages by typographical means) and so on (publisher questionnaires, Soteropoulou, 1996, n.p.). In this context then, translations were particularly convenient vehicles for levelling criticism against the regime because they did not directly refer to the Greek context (Soteropoulou, 1997, pp. 4-6).

### **The (Dis)position of Stochastes Publications**

Since the Greek civil war (1944-1949), professions in the publishing field offered the means of economic survival to followers of the left who were persecuted and excluded from other professions in the public sector. This trend intensified after the coup in 1967, the difference being that now it was young publishers who did not necessarily belong to the banned traditional left that took up the profession (Axelos, 1984, p. 46). *Kalvos*, *Keimena*, *Epikairoteta*, *Neoi Stochoi*, and *Stochastes* constituted the initial core of independent publishing houses which appeared after the coup and which saw books as means of political and aesthetic expression (*ibid.*). Of great interest is the trajectory of *Stochastes* ('thinker') founded by Loukas Axelos and Dafne Papaspeliopoulou in 1969. *Stochastes* concentrated purely on political books; with a careful selection of Greek and foreign authors, an attempt was made to critically synthesize the old and the new (*ibid.*, p. 47). For example, *Stochastes* was at the time one of the many publishing houses that revived the discourse of the Greek War of Independence. The first book they published was *Keimena* ('Texts') by Regas Pheraios Velestinles. The choice of this ideologue from the Greek Revolution evoked an analogy between the current situation in Greece under the dictatorship and the pre-Independence era, when intellectual enlightenment was deemed to be a prerequisite for resistance against oppression.

Generally, a twofold purpose was to be attended to (Soteropoulou, 1996, n.p.): *Stochastes* aspired to create the

conditions that would lead to the overthrow of the colonels and to diffuse New Left ideals—the progressive left not necessarily ascribing to the traditional Leninist tradition of the currently outlawed Greek Communist Party. Thus, all books signal rigorous political engagement: essays by Greek left-wing thinkers (Glenos, Svolos, Maximos), Marcuse (the so-called father of the New Left, a vocal supporter of student movements), Hikmet (the communist Turkish poet who was persecuted), Gramsci and Nesin (the Turkish socialist author and political activist who also confronted the authorities and was sent to prison). *Stochastes* also played an instrumental role in the growing trend of establishing Brecht's works as *vivlia provlematismou* during this time.<sup>4</sup>

The activity of *Stochastes* did not go unnoticed by the regime. The publishers were occasionally summoned to the National Security Directorate (a common intimidation technique at the time). A great number of their books, including Brecht's work, were perceived as subversive and were included (after their publication) in an index of banned books compiled in October 1971 and January 1974.

## Political Texts

*Political Texts* was translated by Dionyses Divares in 1971. Divares was born in 1952 and studied law at the University of Athens; he studied German at the Goethe Institute in Athens and translated Brecht's essays on cinema in 1970 (*Rafaelides Editions*) and then the *Dreigroschen Roman* in the same year (*Papyros*). He was drawn to *Stochastes* because the publishing house stood out as a place where progressive and anti-dictatorship ideas were expressed but without drawing the immediate attention of the regime (Divares, personal communication, 20 September 2004). Divares used a pseudonym (Vasiles Vergotes) at the publisher's advice in order to minimise his visibility to the authorities. The

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4 Quantity-wise, in 1970 Greece produced the same number of translations as either all the Eastern Bloc countries or all West European countries had done in their peak years (source: *Index Translationum*). Translations of Brecht's works also feature prominently as *vivlia provlematismou* in the discourse of bibliographers (Kondogiannes, 1970, p. 29; Frangopoulos, 1971, p. 89).

selection and translation of Brecht's essays, according to Divares, would constitute a bold political statement. As he observes, this decision was vindicated later; there was no need for the book to be promoted in any way. At a time of "intellectual darkness" as he called it, "the slightest contribution was welcome because people were thirsty for knowledge" (personal communication, 20 September 2004).

## A Handbook of Resistance

Recalling the notion of *euphemisation* presented above, or the transformation of interest into disinterest in the pursuit of power, it can be said that even textual features can also serve as double-edged *euphemisms*; in other words, textual specificities allow the Target Text (TT) to decry the oppressive practices of the regime with the help of temporal and cultural displacement, which also reduces responsibility for what is said vis-à-vis the authorities. Indeed, the essays featured in *Political Texts* (PT for short) contain dissident messages that become salient through the very selection of passages, text layout, and a series of changes that affect reader engagement: clause structure changes, contractions, idiomatic use of language, naturalisations and code switching.

The most politically loaded text from the collection is perhaps the essay *Five Difficulties in Writing the Truth* (1934), where Brecht enumerates the difficulties of writing the truth and its necessary conditions, especially for authors under fascist regimes:

- *Mut.* The 'courage' to write the truth at times of oppression.
- *Klugheit.* The 'cleverness' to recognise relevant truths, because some artists make trite, obvious observations, and others, although oblivious to the dangers of being vocal, lack the ability to identify and discuss relevant truths. Knowledge of history, economy and materialist dialectics can sharpen one's sensitivity to truth.
- *Kunst.* The 'skill' to turn truth into a useful weapon that can shed light on the darkness of obscurantism. Asking the right questions can help eliminate social ills. For example, fascism is the basest and cruellest form of capitalism and

only by addressing the real causes of the adverse, inhuman conditions of fascism as derivatives of capitalism can its dangers be dealt with.

- *Urteil*. The 'judgement' to seek out/create those recipients of one's message in whose hands truth can be made effective. Truth must be imparted not just to people of certain convictions, but to people to whom such convictions are suitable because of their particular situation. An author's message must address the recipients' problems and it must be written in the appropriate tenor, if recipients are to be won over and mobilised.
- *List*. The 'cunning' to spread truth among many people. There are various means for achieving this task: linguistic critique (careful wording, undermining the rhetoric of untruth), insertions, spatial displacement, irony and allegory. As Brecht notes, "many things that cannot be said in Germany about Germany can be said about Austria." (Hecht et al., 1993, pp. 74-89)

In the Greek context, Brecht's arguments transform into concrete resistance techniques; they suggest ways to deflect propaganda or defy the regime (c)overtly.

Apart from the general content of the essays, a strong bridging effect between the two geopolitical and temporal contexts (Nazi Germany-Greece) allows opaque criticism to show through in the TT. This is achieved just by the mere quoting of Brecht (Brecht's *List*), as in the following excerpt (Source Text (ST) with literal/gloss translation and TT with gloss translation):

**Example 1:**

Vor nunmehr vier Jahren spielte sich in meinem Land eine Reihe schrecklicher Ereignisse ab, welche anzeigten, daß Kultur in allen ihren Phänomenen in eine tödliche Gefahrenzone eingetreten war. Der faschistische Umsturz erweckte sofort in einem großen Teil der Welt die leidenschaftlichen Proteste, seine Gewalttaten erweckten Abscheu.

Four years ago a series of events took place in my country, which showed that culture, in all its manifestations, entered a deadly zone. The fascist coup immediately sparked [awoke] passionate protests in a great part of the world, their acts of violence triggered [awoke] abhorrence.

Πάνε πια τέσσερα χρόνια που στη χώρα μου διαδραματίστηκαν μιά σειρά φοβερά γεγονότα, που έδειξαν πως η κουλτούρα σ' όλες της τις εκδηλώσεις έχει μπει κάτω από ένα θανάσιμο κλοιό. Το φασιστικό πραξικόπημα ξεσήκωσε αμέσως σ' ένα μεγάλο μέρος του κόσμου τις πιο φλογερές διαμαρτυρίες, οι βιαιότητες του προκάλεσαν την αποστροφή.

It has been four years now since a series of terrible events unravelled in my land, which showed that culture in all its manifestations has entered a deadly circle. The fascist coup caused among a great part of the people/world the most fiery protests, its acts of violence caused abhorrence.

(PT/27)

This is the beginning of Brecht's speech at the Second International Writers' Congress for the Defence of Culture that took place in 1937. The Greek translation appeared during the fourth year of the junta's tenure, and culture had already been through the tribulations of censorship, arrests, and exile.

Other passages have a very strong anti-dictatorship framing potential because they generally describe the tyrannical aspects of National Socialism, a subject that was tabooed under the junta. In *Faschismus und Kapitalismus* (1935) Brecht deplors the fact that "intellectual workers" do not resort to "a cry of wrath" when communist newspapers are banned and no one notices that the sources of development and truth are stifled. The silencing of the Greek press and the reluctance of cultural producers to raise their voice in protest against the junta were highly relevant issues for readers who lived in a police-controlled state.

In terms of salient changes, a number of interesting patterns emerge in the TT. Clause structure, for instance, is generally upheld in the TT with respect to the choice between active and passive voice (or 'Zustandspassiv,' with the verb 'to be'), and impersonal constructions. However, the Greek translation tends to use the active voice where oppressive practices are mentioned, even when the passive is used in the original:

**Example 2:**

Warum [ist] das Leben von Millionen Menschen, der allermeisten Menschen so **verarmt**, **entblößt**, halb oder ganz **vernichtet**?

Why is the life of millions of people, of most people thus impoverished, bared, or annihilated by half or completely?

Γιατί **φτωχαίνουν, γυμνώνουν, εκμηδενίζουν** ως ένα βαθμό ή και ολότελα τις ζωές τόσων εκατομμυρίων ανθρώπων, των πιο πολλών;

Why do they impoverish, strip and annihilate to a certain extent or completely the lives of so many millions of people, of most (of them)?

(PT/44)

**Example 3:**

die Stätte der Wahrheit und der Entwicklung **geschlossen wurde**

The voice of truth and development was shut

**πράξανε** τη φωνή της αλήθειας και της προόδου  
they blocked the voice of truth and development

(PT/55)

Here there is a change of focus: instead of phenomena or processes being commented on, the agents of these processes are brought to the fore. Since the agents of the actions described are the perpetrators of murder and censorship and cause suffering for 'so many millions of people' ('so' was added in the TT, *Example 2*), readers are encouraged to dissociate themselves from this tyrannical 'they.'

In contrast, inclusive-we's that replace ST passives, as well as the indefinite pronoun *man* (one), imply participation:

**Example 4:**

Soviel **wird verlangt**, wenn **verlangt wird**, der Schriftsteller soll die Wahrheit schreiben.

This much is required/demanded, when it is required that authors should write the truth.

Τέτοιες **είναι οι απαιτήσεις μας**, όταν **ζητάμε** από τους συγγραφείς να γράφουν την αλήθεια.

Such are our requirements, when we ask authors to write the truth.

(PT/26)



*Example 5:*

Wann **werden** diese Schichten **enttäuscht sein**?  
When will these (social) classes be disillusioned?

Σε ποιά περίπτωση **θα έχουμε** απογοήτευση αυτών των  
στρωμάτων;  
In which instance do we have disillusionment in these strata  
(of society)?  
(PT/31)

*Example 6:*

**Man wird aufspringen** und den Peinigern in den Arm **fallen**.  
One will jump up and restrain the tormentors.

**Θα ξεσηκωθούμε** και **θα ῥθούμε** στα χέρια με τους  
βασανιστές.  
We will rise up and we'll grapple with the torturers/  
tormentors.  
(PT/43)

In the original, passives and impersonal constructions imply Brecht and his readers/listeners. In the TT, the author's voice clearly merges with that of the translator and the Greek readers in inclusive we's. This technique reinforces in-groupness vis-à-vis oppression and the problems discussed.

There are other minor alterations that contribute to a shift in the tenor of the message. The texts feature many vowel contractions in words and grammatical particles. Contractions are signalled in Greek with apostrophes and elision of the vowel(s) affected: τ' άκουγαν, ούτ' εγώ, μ' ευγνωμοσύνη, θ' αφήσει, το ῥχουν, θα ῥελα, να ῥναι. This feature, more common in spoken language, cumulatively creates a tone of directness, as the texts' formality reduces. Frequent use of contractions renders the translation informal, accessible, down-to-earth. The 'speakability' of the texts increases with the simultaneous use of some less standard spelling variations: *πραχτικό* instead of *πρακτικό* ('practical'), *διχτατορίες* instead of *δικτατορίες* ('dictatorships'), *ιδιοχτησία* instead of *ιδιοκτησία* ('property') and so on. Shifts of this type anticipate a readership with a certain linguistic profile. Brecht is in a sense brought closer to the reader and speaks their everyday language, the *demotike* variety of Greek.

In a similar vein, the already down-to-earth, accessible style of Brecht's writing is accentuated in the TT. More colloquial expressions are favoured. At certain points, colloquialisms and informality give the text a pseudo-poetic tone, which is rather unusual for essays:

**Example 7:**

a) laute Beschuldigungen (loud accusations) >φωνακλάδικες διαμαρτυρίες (raucous[+coll.] complaints)  
(PT/13)

b) Fruchtbarkeit (fertility)>καρπεράδα (fertility[+coll.])  
(PT/18)

c) die Habe (possessions)>το βιος (possessions[+coll.])  
(PT/20)

d) die Verschlechterung (deterioration)>σκάρτεμα (rendering shoddy[+coll.])  
(PT/33)

e) führt mit Sicherheit (in certainty leads to)>οδηγεί στα σίγουρα (leads with certainty[+coll.])  
(PT/52)

A similar technique of establishing emotive and linguistic proximity is the use of loan words. Instead of opting for widely used words from *katharevousa* or formal register in general, the translator employs the language of 'everyman,' lexical items that also allude to the mode of speaking (and writing) of left wing people in Greece:

**Example 8:**

a) von dieser... **Art** ist ja gerade  
it is just of this kind

απ'αυτήν τη **στόφα**... είναι καμωμένη  
it is made[+informal] of this[+contraction] material[+coll.]  
(PT/9)

b) die Roheit kommt... von den **Geschäften**, die ohne sie nicht mehr gemacht werden können

Roughness comes... from the deals, that cannot be done without it[the roughness].

Η ωμότητα αιτία... έχει **τις μπίζνες** που δεν μπορούν να γίνουν χωρίς αυτή.

As its cause roughness... has the business [transliterated into Greek] that cannot be done without it.

(PT/46)

Loan words further strengthen the claim for common ground. For instance, by using the transliteration of 'business' (8b) in a text that presents fascism as the most brutal form of capitalism, the translator appeals to supporters of *demotike* and simultaneously achieves a denigration effect: he openly rejects a socio-economic hierarchy based on oppression and violence, the 'roughness' on which dealings in fascism rely.

Certain naturalisations can also be observed in the translation. They constitute additional tenor modulations as well as points of contact that render the text more familiar:

**Example 9:**

a) Ländereien (estates)>τσιφλίκια (\*pasha's property and area of jurisdiction)  
(PT/13)

b) die **Leibeigenen** werden zu Herren  
the serfs become masters

οι **κολλήγοι** γίνονται αφεντάδες  
the tenant-farmers become masters[+coll.]  
(PT/20)

c) Dieses Instrument habe ich geschaffen durch die Reorganization der **Landespolizei**  
This institution/service I [General Göring] have created through the reorganization of the district police  
Αυτό το όργανο το δημιούργησα αναδιοργανώνοντας τη **χωροφυλακή**.  
I (general Göring) created this force by reorganising the chorofylake  
(PT/40)

The terms used for 'estates' (9a) and 'tenant farmers' (9b) in particular are allusions to the feudal system of the Ottoman empire which was inherited by wealthy Greeks (or former collaborators with the Ottoman rule) and which remained functional for some decades after Greece's independence. Such terms cast in sharper relief relations of exploitation discussed in the original. In (9c) the Greek *chorofylake* refers to a military body with policing duties which, just like the rest of the security forces, played a significant role in establishing and supporting the Greek junta.<sup>5</sup>

The effect of these micro-alterations is an overall increase in the level of participation on the part of the readership; the TT is more accessible in terms of tenor and more relevant in terms of presupposition; this can perhaps be seen as a very literal interpretation of Brecht's proposition to modify a message, thus combining his '*judgement*' and '*cunning*' techniques respectively so as to appeal to/galvanise the appropriate readership. The ideological implications of tenor shifts are particularly striking in Brecht's critical (and mocking) deconstruction of the speeches given by Nazi officials: a Christmas message to the people by Rudolf Hess, Hitler's deputy, and a speech by Hermann Göring on the crushing defeat of communism. In both cases, Brecht places the original speech in one column and the real, reconstructed meaning behind Nazi discourse in a column next to it. The translator engages in this playful exercise of 'discourse analysis' and intensifies the difference between the two versions in two ways, a) by slight tenor shifts (contractions, spelling) and b) by more intrusive code-switching. The translation of the 'interpretation version' sustains the informal, accessible style of the essays in the volume, occasionally exhibiting even more informal language than the original:

**Example 10:**

a) (Hess' speech word-for-word) in diesem Winter **läßt** Deutschland keines seiner Kinder **hungern**

This winter, Germany will let none of its children starve

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<sup>5</sup> This policing body does not exist today; the term *chorofylakas* can be used in a derogatory manner to describe individuals or states who exert control through the use of force.

αυτό το χειμώνα η Γερμανία **δε θα αφήσει** κανένα από τα  
 παιδιά της **να πεινάσει**  
 this winter Germany will not let any of its children get  
 hungry  
 (PT/34)

b) (Brecht's reconstruction) in diesem Winter **lassen**  
 Deutschlands Besizende keinen Besitzlosen **vollends ganz**  
**verhungern**  
 this winter Germany's owners will not let those without any  
 property starve completely

αυτό το χειμώνα οι ιδιοκτήτες της Γερμανίας **δε θ' αφήσουν**  
 κανέναν εργαζόμενο **να ψοφήσει** ολότελα απ' την πείνα  
 this winter the owners[+coll.] of Germany won't[+contr.]  
 let any worker die[+animal] completely[+colloquial]) out  
 of[+contr.] hunger  
 (PT/34)

The repetition of the colloquial use of the verb 'to die[+animal]' (10b) throughout the entire translation of the speech builds up the incongruity effect; the original message is sharply juxtaposed to the deconstructed version, exposing the callousness of Nazi officials.

The translator also constructs an identity faultline between the two columns. The speech column exhibits the use of *katharevousa*, the purist variety of Greek championed by the junta. For the 'reconstructed meaning' column, *demotike*, the everyday spoken variety is employed. Thus differences in syntactical, grammatical and lexical complexity between the speech and the reconstruction versions in Greek are much more striking and appear even in stretches where there is no shift at all in the level of formality in the German original (speech-reconstruction versions):

**Example 11:**

(Göring's speech, word-for-word) Die deutsche Regierung  
 muß sich vorbehalten, **in völliger Freiheit...**  
 the German government reserves the right in full freedom  
 to...

Η γερμανική κυβέρνηση**ς** διατηρεί το δικαίωμα, **εν απολύτω ελευθερία...**

The German government[+archaic inflection] reserves the right, in full freedom to... [+archaic prepositional phrase/adjective-noun inflection]

(Brecht's reconstruction) Die deutsche Regierung muß sich vorbehalten, **in völliger Freiheit...**

the German government reserves the right in full freedom to...

Η γερμανική κυβέρνηση διατηρεί το δικαίωμα **απόλυτα ελεύθερη...**

The German government[+Modern Greek inflection] reserves the right fully free to...

(PT/38)

**Example 12:**

(Göring's speech, word-for-word) und **kann dabei** fremde Ratschläge keine **Rücksicht nehmen**

and cannot take into consideration advice from others on this

και δεν **δύναται** να **λάβει υπ' όψιν** συμβουλές άλλων **επ' αυτού**

and cannot[+formal] take into account[+ archaic prepositional phrase/noun inflection] the advice of others on this[+archaic prepositional phrase]

(Brecht's reconstruction) und **kann dabei** fremde Ratschläge keine **Rücksicht nehmen**

and cannot take into consideration advice from others on this

και δεν **μπορεί** να **πάρει υπ' όψη** συμβουλές άλλων **πάνω σ' αυτό**

and cannot[+informal] take[+informal] into account[+Modern Greek prepositional phrase/inflection] the advice of others on this[+Modern Greek preposition phrase]

(PT/39)

Speeches and addresses to the people were very common when the book was published in Greece as the media were under government control. The translator seems to mimic such publicity forays. By using *katharevousa* he equates Nazi officials with the Greek government and thus maps the callousness and

reprehensible practices of National Socialism onto the Greek junta.

### Concluding Remarks

Bourdieu's theory suggests that the context of translated texts (as is the case with any other symbolic form) is the field of cultural production, which is linked to other fields of society, such as the field of politics and the economical field. In this field, agents of translation play various roles according to their positions, entering the 'logic of the game' (i.e. field) and pursuing their socially constructed interests. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of translations as cultural products must include a multi-layered approach to symbolic forms: the texts, their relation to textual traditions, to institutions, non-discursive practices, the social standing of agents that depends on their investment in resources in the social field, asymmetrical power hierarchies and censorship.

In the authoritarian context of Greece under the colonels (1967-1974), agents of translation used their cultural and political capital and objectified a series of subversive values and worldviews in books in order to mobilise politically sensitive citizens. Their interests lay in exposing the (symbolic) violence of the regime and in flouting the rules that safeguarded 'national' values. Given the lack of political structures, books served as substitutes of debate and as means of ideological preparation for social action. This aim was of course pursued covertly. Subversive texts seemed to brim with *euphemisms* to appear disinterested and avoid detection, but simultaneously decried the junta. In other words, these texts covertly discontinued the *doxa* of political oppression.

Brecht's *Political Texts* is a characteristic case of a 'resistance text' of this sort. It was launched by a politically active publisher and translator who attempted to give even greater currency to subversive ideas and particularly to Brecht's thought. The TT relies heavily on contextual ambiguity to deliver an anti-dictatorship message, most notably offering Brecht's highly 'quotable' practical advice on how to evade censorship. Slight changes in the translation modify Brecht's voice, which morphs

into the voice of an accessible intellectual. The TT progressively draws a line between a collective 'we' that needs to be mobilised and a tyrannical 'them' that exploit the masses.

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**ABSTRACT: Translation as Social Action: Brecht's 'Political Texts' in Greek** — This paper places an influential anthology of Brecht's texts in the context of the Greek junta (1967-1974). Drawing on the sociological work of Pierre Bourdieu, it shows how the text constitutes an euphemisation of the power of a politically active publisher who opposed the regime with what came to be seen as 'social art' by various agents of the publishing field at the time. It also demonstrates how the tactical presentation of the material in the anthology helps map the oppression of the Nazi rule onto the junta while identifying a 'plural-self' that opposes symbolic and physical violence.

**RÉSUMÉ : La traduction comme activisme social : les « textes politiques » de Brecht en grec** — Le présent article situe une importante anthologie des textes de Brecht dans le contexte de la junte grecque (1967-1974). Il est possible d'observer, en s'appuyant sur les travaux du sociologue Pierre Bourdieu, comment peut se manifester dans le texte une euphémisation du pouvoir, soit une forme de contestation du régime qui à l'époque était considérée par de nombreuses maisons d'éditions comme un « art social ». L'article met aussi en lumière la présentation stratégique de l'anthologie qui, en identifiant « une pluralité identitaire » s'élevant contre la violence physique et symbolique, parvient à nous aider à nous représenter l'oppression nazie dans la junte.

**Keywords:** Brecht, censorship, Greek, Bourdieu, political.

**Mots-clés :** Brecht, censure, grec, Bourdieu, politique.

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